

OAKS, PA – Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) spoke today, February 20, 2009, at the Grand Opening of the Greater Philadelphia Expo Center. One of largest privately-owned exhibition centers on the East Coast – with 220,000 square feet of exhibitor-friendly space – the Greater Philadelphia Expo Center is twenty miles from Philadelphia and accessible from five major routes on the 422 corridor. In its first year, it will host at least 40 consumer events and trade shows. Trade events, especially, draw out-of-town visitors who take advantage of the region's hotels, restaurants, shopping, and entertainment. The facility is expected to have an estimated \$280 million economic impact on the region. The center is managed by Chris Welch and Bill Marchese of American Expo Corp., which also runs the Greater Reading Expo Center in Berks County.

“When Fort Washington Expo Center closed in 2006, Montgomery County lost \$280 million in annual economic activity,” said Congressman Sestak. “The majority of its large trade shows moved out of our area. Many of them moved out of Pennsylvania altogether. But show producers wanted to return to Montgomery County, and I’m pleased today to say that they have.”

“I don’t have to tell anyone where our economy is today,” the Congressman continued. “But this facility has already hosted two consumer events as well as the Philadelphia Gift Show, and each event drew record crowds. The big story here is one of reclaimed jobs and a tremendous boost to the county and regional economy. This facility will generate more than \$130 million in its first year alone. This year, 20,000 more hotel room nights will be booked, 334,000 people will attend trade and consumer shows, and more than 12,700 vendors will occupy exhibitor booths. That’s good news in this economy at a time when most other economic news has been negative.”

“Thanks to Audubon Land Development and the Neilson family for taking the initiative in this project,” said the Congressman. “The Neilsons are long-time investors in their communities and they’ve done so with their private money. Not a dime of state or federal funds went into this conversion, which included costly road improvements and site development. That says a lot in these times. We should all be saying thank you to them.”

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in

Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of “Deep Blue,” the Navy’s anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the “Global War on Terrorism.” He served as President Clinton’s Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. Congress.

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